



Logic Studio

It's one of the biggest updates for the program and it addresses many former issues well. It also creates a few new ones but it comes bundled in a magnificent package.

GEORGE SHILLING is also magnificently packaged and feels strangely drawn to it.

Logic Pro version 8 comes as Logic Studio, bundled with MainStage for live use, Soundtrack Pro for audio-for-video duties, Waveburner for CD mastering, and other items such as Apple Loops Utility. Furthermore, all the previous Jam Packs are now included, so you get a humungous total install of 46Gb. The XS-Key is gone, authorisation is simply via Serial Number, and the price is reduced — Apple is banking on you needing a hardware upgrade to handle the increased overhead required as you can just about run Logic on a very late G4 PowerMac, but the 8-Core Mac Pro looks ever more desirable...

Logic 8 is a truly major update, with a vast number of changes to interface and operation. Following the lengthy install the most apparent change is the complete overhaul of the appearance: the whole look is vastly improved. The menus have changed, and a number of new buttons make access to frequently needed items more immediate. Apple has attempted to enable the use of the program from one main screen, with the central Arrange window (which now allows sample accurate editing) flanked by other useful expanding windows.

From the right hand side, you can pop open a Media and Lists area. This has several tabs, including a brand new and highly intuitive Library for searching for instrument sounds and plug-in settings. A Browser enables scouring for other files, and the Audio Bin section replaces the old Audio Window, and is tidier. The enhanced Loop Browser makes using Apple Loops, or any other type of Loop, easy to search and import. In many situations, Media and Lists items can simply be dragged into the Arrange area to create a new channel with the desired settings. The Inspector area on the left is an enhanced version of the previous Parameter window, now helpfully featuring two fader strips as appropriate — in addition to the current channel, its destination channel is also displayed alongside.

Edit windows now open up at the bottom of the

Arrange window with direct access buttons for each editor type. This keeps things tidy, but although the height is adjustable, a floating window will still be the preferred option in many instances. At the top of the Arrange is a customisable toolbar, while at the bottom is the fixed customisable Transport window. The possibility to easily hide this was introduced in v8.01 after some whining by seasoned users.

Despite such radical interface reworking (no doubt with major code rewriting), almost all previous features are retained, but one or two things have caused ructions with die-hard users. Notably, the Audio Configuration Window has completely disappeared. Part of its capability to paste complex plug-in setups between projects has been snuck back into 8.01, but the situation is still not entirely satisfactory; when there are any pre-existing plug-ins in the destination project, it seems that all plug-ins revert to factory default settings.

Some of Logic's terminology has been rationalised. For example, an Audio Object becomes a Channel Strip, an Audio Instrument becomes a Software Instrument, and so on. To hardcore dyed-in-the-wool users, these changes are minor irritations, but to any new or casual user, these changes make the whole experience more, well, logical. There are plenty of small annoyances for familiar users. For example, even pressing the Record button again when in record doesn't work the same way it used to by default. But overall, the casual user and new user will find things far easier.

A great deal of criticism was previously levelled at Logic's audio editing functionality. However, there are a number of improvements in this area. A new Junction tool becomes available when the mouse is correctly placed where two audio regions meet, so you

can avoid problems with regions becoming hidden when overlapping. You can now zoom the height of waveforms within regions using a slider, making it easier to see the audio when zoomed in.

Take management is now catered for with new features. Recording multiple takes on a single track results in a folder containing the takes while an innovative Quick Swipe Comping feature allows clicked and dragged sections of different takes to be automatically compiled. An Input monitoring button is now available on channel strips for tracks that are not armed (although this doesn't apply to DAE channels).

A whole raft of features relating to Surround have been introduced, including the option to bounce to DVD-A format. Plug-ins are now surround compatible, either with dedicated versions or by automatically configuring as multichannel versions. An enhanced panner, proper surround metering and a new master channel strip all make surround work rather easier.

The Mixer has been rationalised, combining the Environment Mixer and Track Mixer into one window, with a useful Arrange view that shows only the channels relevant to the Arrange window.

The Project Manager has gone, and the whole handling of songs and projects has been much improved. There is now far less chance of related files being spread across different locations, as any new project ties everything to the same root folder in a (ahem!) logical manner.

Global Track functions are vastly enhanced and are easier to set up with a new configuration dialogue, and Nodes are easier to set up and use. Audio Units can now be processed, and if connection is broken or the other computer shuts down, there are no problems on the host.

There is a new Low Latency mode for recording when plug-ins are in circuit — this limits the maximum delay time to a preset amount, automatically bypassing the worst offending plug-ins and it's fantastic for overdubs during mixing. And plug-ins' header sections have been given a makeover, with a transparent grey masthead and a smart new layout.

EXS24's Instrument Editor is way better, and many plug-ins and instruments have benefited from improvements. The new Delay Designer offers up to 26 individual taps and includes filtering, level, pan and pitch transposing.

Of course, Apple hasn't quite perfected Logic yet, but this is a huge leap in the right direction for logical thinking humans. Some of the bugs have been ironed out with 8.01, but there are undoubtedly some tweaks, fixes and improvements still to

come. Apple's alleged censoring of 'support' forums, and the secretive nature of software development can mean that users feel frustrated while they wait, but that is true of most platforms. Logic 8 is mightily impressive, and is now far closer to becoming all things to all men (and women). ■



PROS Logic is now much more logical in behaviour and usage; it's cheaper and includes useful extra software.

CONS Still enormously complicated; some bugs, and some daftness such as the loss of Audio Configuration functionality.

Contact

APPLE, US:
Website: www.apple.com/logicstudio/